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If man ever had riches lavished at his shrine, that man certainly is Mr. BROWNING. It is a beautiful comment upon the pure-mindedness of the pair, that they can thus give the world an insight into the most secret springs of their being.

We have dwelt upon this episode in the poet's life, because to us it is a truly blessed spectacle when so much mind can come out of its seclusion, to become the very impersonation of womanly devotion and tenderness. How such a history shames the absurd notion, prevailing in certain minds, that an intellectual woman is somewhat unsexed, and rendered incapable of loving deeply and passionately.

Shortly after this happy marriage, the two poets—one in heart and soul, though still two in their name and fame—removed to Florence, Italy, where their permanent residence was fixed. None more than the BROWNINGs are friends of popular liberty; and Florence, with its sweet air, and freedom to foreigners, is a proper field for their repose. Mrs. BROWNING sings, in the little lyric from which we have already quoted :

"I am no trumpet, but a reed:
No flattering breath shall from me lead
A silver sound, a hollow sound'
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that, in re-echoing,
Would leave a bondman faster bound.

Well has she kept her promise. In her *Casa Guidi Windows*, or *Sketches of the Italian Revolution in 1848*, she shows how her heart is with the popular cause in poor, oppressed Italy. The volume is full of strong expression, glowing at times in its enthusiasm, yet stern in its purpose of stigmatizing tyranny and upholding liberty. Very knowing critics pretend to detect in the volume evidence of her assimilation with the idiosyncrasies of her husband. It is true, there appears less of the obscurity and mannerisms of her earlier poems, in what has fallen from her pen since 1846; but, to us, it seems that she is still distinctively Mrs. BARRET BROWNING; and, even in her last, and perhaps best work, *Aurora Leigh*—wherein plainness of speech is remarkable—we find her impress so certainly stamped upon the undercurrent and expression of the whole as to make this charge of "conjugal copyism" one of much injustice. So far as the husband has succeeded in giving true English expression to her perhaps too classically trained tastes, there is no desire to deny the presence of his mental influence; but

when it comes to stripping her of originality, making her simply an echo of her husband, we feel like crying "fie, for shame!" upon such criticism. It generally proceeds from these persons who, jealous of merit in woman, seek to prove her the shadow of some man who is sure to have gone before.

The last work of Mrs. BROWNING is her *Aurora Leigh*, which she pronounces the best and maturest of all her productions. It is worthy of this promise; and now stands out in bold relief from latter-day poetry. Autobiographic and didactic in its character, it yet has all the charm of romance, and every page glows with and irradiates the soul of the poet and pure-hearted defender of humanity. There are, it is true, passages of tedious tale, and some expressions which, in a previous number, we have characterized as inexcusably careless and in bad taste; but what poem of equal length possesses fewer faults of commission? All writers are guilty of lapses and haste, to a greater or less degree; and it scarcely becomes the reader to cull these blemishes to the neglect of the beauty which is the characteristic of the whole. Leave such carping to the critic whose office seems to be to sift chaff from the true grain, rather than grain from the chaff. Space forbids that we should refer at length to *Aurora Leigh*, though we confess it would give us great pleasure to make quotation of some of its many remarkably fine passages, as showing something of the power and moral that is in the poet's pen. Let us take it for granted that lovers of poetry have already become possessed of the volume, and are, therefore, familiar with its character.

Mrs. BROWNING is now, we believe, in excellent (for her) health—is the happy mother of two children—is the possessor of a legacy of £11,000 from the poet John Kenyon; we may, therefore, consistently promise ourselves something from her pen with each recurring season, for some time to come. Long may she live to adorn the age, her sex, and the literature of which she is now confessedly among the leading lights

We may be permitted to quote, in closing the following description of the lady, as given by a gentleman who met the poet sometime since, at Florence. He says:—

"Mrs. BROWNING I found possessed of a decidedly fine intellectual countenance, the eye black and large, the cheeks at that time very thin, which, with a diminutive chin, gave the lower part of the face a

somewhat triangular shape. The features were regular except the mouth, the upper part of which projected a little too much. If it were not for this defect, and the evident traces of illness, she might have been pronounced handsome. Her black hair was worn in ringlets, falling on either side nearly to the waist, which gave to the delicate figure a strange sprite-like effect. Her voice had that true Shaksperian quality of excellence in woman; it was low, clear, and sweet. The countenance, upon the whole, wore an intensely calm, melancholy expression, with the manner of one who had long lived a very retired life."

ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS, PHILADELPHIA.



THE Thirty-fourth annual exhibition of the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, opened on the 27th. Many changes have been made in the disposition and classification. Among the leading features of the exhibition, is the exquisite marb'e bust of "Spring," by Palmer, which was purchased by the *Cosmopolitan Art Association* last summer—and at the distribution in January last, was awarded to Mrs. Howland, of Pennsylvania—by whose permission the Academy has placed the work on exhibition—where it daily challenges the admiration of all visitors. In a late issue the "North American" says: "The northeast gallery is now devoted exclusively to pictures by American artists, among which a number of recent contributions will attract especial attention an objects of special interest. The array of sculpture, which is quite limited, will be found in the gallery. The southeast gallery opposite, with very few exceptions, is filled with foreign paintings, and both look fresh and inviting. The two lower rooms devoted to casts from the antique, will be found on the southwest; while on the northwest gallery is placed the ever admitted 'Deliverance of Leyden.' The rotunda contains a fine collection of photographs, many of which are imported, and present views of foreign scenery, cathedrals with their gorgeous fretwork and decorations, altar pieces, palaces, thrones, and a vast collection of objects known to a majority of us only through the medium of books."